

BERKSHIRE COUNTY YOUNG ADULTS SURVEY

RESULTS

A survey examining the attitudes, preferences and needs of young adults (age 18-39) in
Berkshire County



9/17/2015

Berkshire County Young Adult Survey Results

Contents

Executive Summary..... 1

Overall Results 1

 Those who live here 2

 Those who may leave..... 5

 Those who have left..... 7

 Values..... 11

 What can be done 11

 Characteristics of Respondents 12

Analysis of Differences 15

 Natives vs Non-Natives 15

 Plans to stay 16

 Current Residency 18

 Educational Attainment 18

 Age 20

 Gender 21

 Did you leave for College or the Military 22

Strategies 24

Executive Summary

On February 17, 2015 the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission released a survey for young adults aged 18-39 with some connection to Berkshire County, Massachusetts. Over the next 1.5 months, over 3,791 people responded to the survey before it closed on April

1, 2015. Over the course of this report, the overall results will be discussed along with the differences between various cohorts based on age, educational attainment, growing up in the Berkshires versus growing up outside of the region, and currently living in the Berkshires versus living outside of the region. At the conclusion of the analysis, broad strategies will be presented to help attract and retain young adults to the region.

I believe the Berkshires are worth staying for, and I wanted to help make that a reality

Overall, the respondents indicated that young adults enjoy living in the Berkshires. They enjoy the natural scenery, the outdoor recreation and the cultural activities. They are mostly here because their families are here and secondarily because they have jobs here. They enjoy the rural environment and the urban downtowns. These are things that need to be promoted as the region works to retain and attract more young adults. There are things, however, that cause concern. Respondents cite a lack of quality jobs in the fields they went to college for, a lack of quality affordable housing, a lack of things to do and too much of a focus on tourism. They cite a lack of opportunities, lack of diversity, and too many illegal drugs. Some of these things may be more of a perception than a reality, however they need to be addressed to make our region more attractive to young adults.

Overall Results

Overall, there were 3,791 respondents to the survey, of which 2,870 were used due to them completing the entire survey and being in the right age range. Due to the nature of this survey, the results are representative of the young adult population, however they are not statistically valid based on statistical sampling since it is not a purely random sample. The results are indicative of the results that would be expected and BRPC believes it provides a complete picture of the concerns of the population.

Of the 2,870 respondents, 75% were raised in the Berkshire with the remaining 25% raised outside of the county (Table 1). Sixty seven percent (67%) of the respondents currently live in the Berkshires with the remaining 33% living outside of the county.

Table 1. Location of Origin

Location of Origin	% of Respondents
Berkshire County	75.0%
Massachusetts	6.7%
New England	4.2%
Northeast	7.8%
Mid Atlantic	1.0%
Midwest	1.2%
South	1.7%
West	1.2%
All Over	0.3%

Berkshire County Young Adult Survey Results

International	0.9%
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One thousand three hundred and sixty seven (1,367) or 63.6% of those raised in the Berkshires still live here, while 557 or 36.5% have left. Seven hundred and eighty four (784), or 77.5%, of those raised outside of the county still live here and 162, or 22.5%, have left.

I moved here for a job, but when that was done after three years, I had a life and friends I didn't want to give up.

Seventy four percent (74.2%) of all the respondents consider the Berkshires a desirable place to live.

Those who live here

The respondents who currently live in the Berkshires represent almost every community in the county as seen in Table 2. The responses closely correlate with the existing population in the county.

Table 2. Current Community of Residence in Berkshire County

Community	% of Respondents	% of Berkshire Population (Age 18-39)
Adams	7.9%	6.2%
Alford	0.1%	0.2%
Becket	0.5%	1.2%
Cheshire	2.9%	1.7%
Clarksburg	1.1%	1.1%
Dalton	4.9%	4.3%
Egremont	0.9%	0.5%
Florida	0.4%	0.6%
Great Barrington	5.4%	5.8%
Hancock	0.3%	0.6%
Hinsdale	1.8%	1.3%
Lanesborough	1.9%	2.6%
Lee	3.6%	4.6%
Lenox	4.4%	2.0%
Monterey	0.4%	0.3%
Mount Washington	0.0%	0.0%
New Ashford	0.1%	0.1%
New Marlborough	0.6%	0.6%
North Adams	11.8%	14.0%
Otis	0.8%	0.7%
Peru	0.4%	0.8%
Pittsfield	39.4%	35.6%
Richmond	1.1%	0.8%
Sandisfield	0.2%	0.5%
Savoy	0.1%	0.4%
Sheffield	1.6%	2.0%

Berkshire County Young Adult Survey Results

Stockbridge	1.2%	1.3%
Tyringham	0.4%	0.2%
Washington	0.3%	0.2%
West Stockbridge	0.8%	0.9%
Williamstown	4.3%	8.4%
Windsor	0.4%	0.4%

The main reason that young adults are currently living in the Berkshires is because they have family in the area (67.2%). Table 3 lists the various answers to why the respondents live in the Berkshires.

I love the Berkshires and was lucky enough to find a job I enjoy here.

Table 3. Why did you move to and/or stay in the Berkshires

Reasons for living in Berkshire County	% of respondents
Have family in the area	67.2%
Have a job in the area	47.5%
Have friends in the area	44.3%
Enjoy the natural scenery	42.9%
Enjoy the outdoor recreation opportunities	33.0%
Don't want the stress and traffic of living in a big city	31.3%
Enjoy having four seasons / enjoy the snow and cold weather	27.8%
Want to live in a rural area, small town, small urban area	27.3%
Want to raise a family here	26.2%
Live in a house I can afford	24.8%
New England lifestyle	24.2%
It's my home, it's where I belong	20.3%
I can't afford to leave	19.6%
Enjoy the cultural activities	19.3%
Want to live relatively close to major urban areas	16.9%
Went to college in the area	16.9%
My partner moved to the area / wanted to stay in the area	15.8%
Desire to live in a liberal area	15.1%
Living with parents to pay off student loans	12.4%
Low crime rate	11.4%
Started a business here	4.9%

Berkshire County Young Adult Survey Results

Figure 1. Map of Respondents in Berkshire County

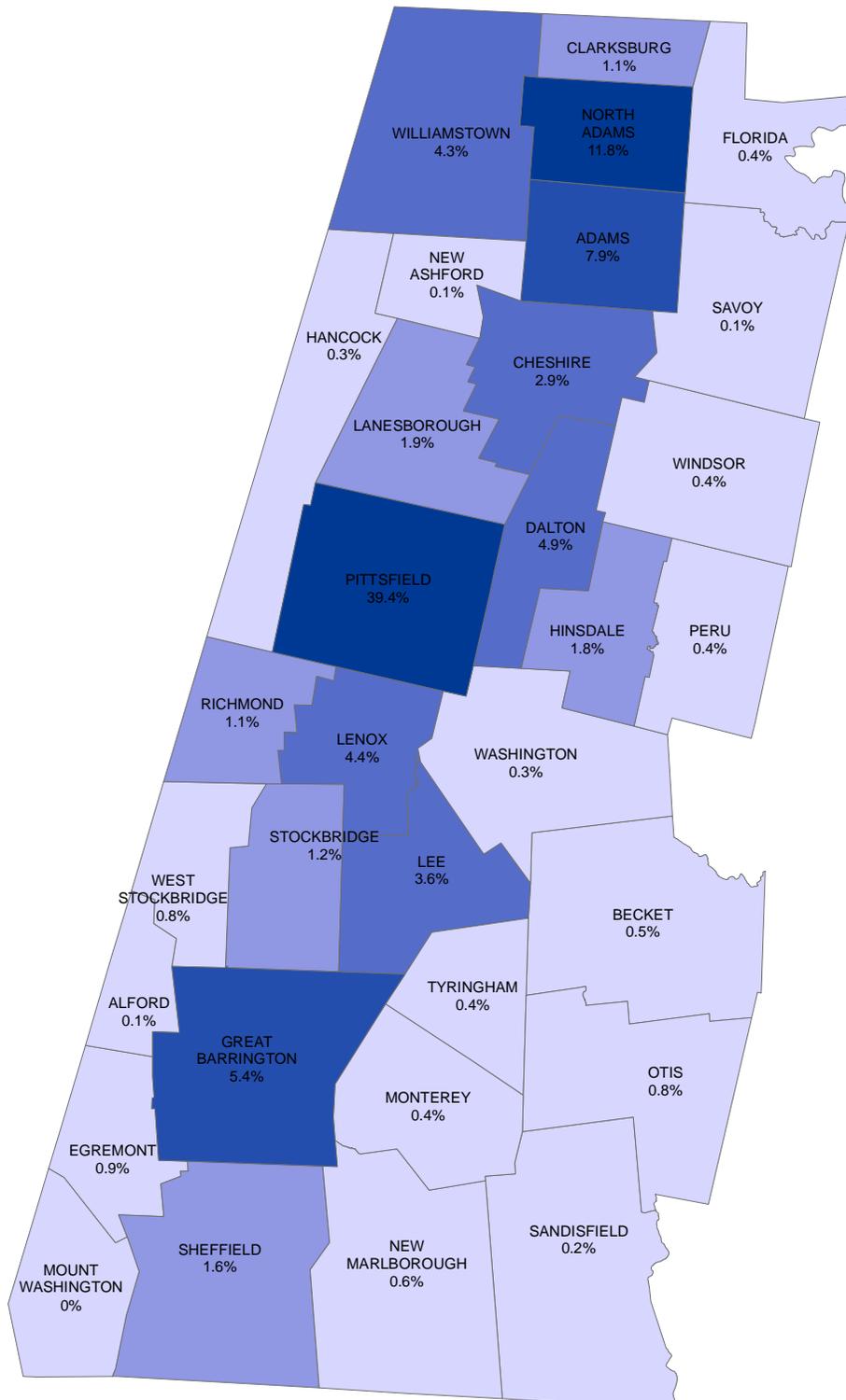
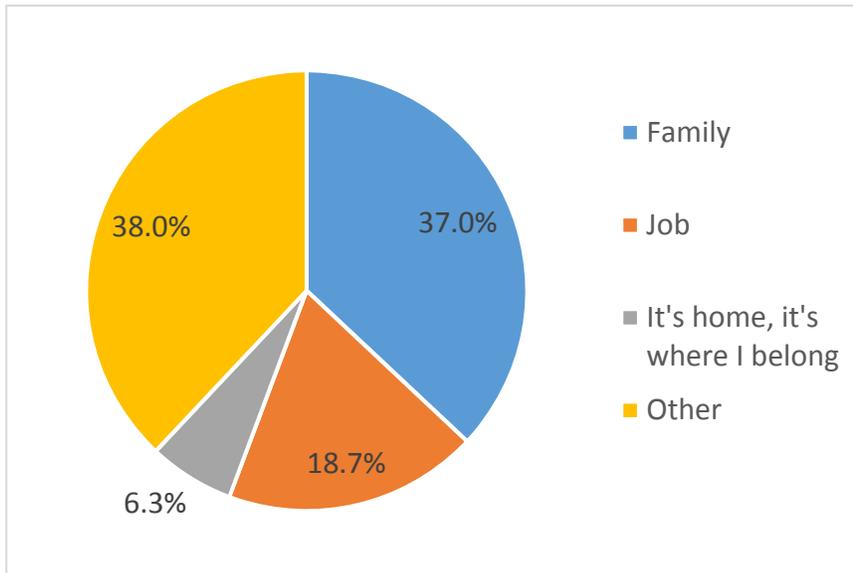


Figure 2. Single biggest reason for living in the Berkshires



When asked about the single biggest reason for coming to or staying in the Berkshires, family again topped the list at 37% followed by a job at 18.7%. “It’s home, it’s where I belong” came in at 6.3% and all other responses came in with less than 5% each.

Overall, 79.9% of respondents enjoy living in the Berkshires with only 20.1% not enjoying it.

Of those who currently live in the Berkshires, 43.6% were raised here and lived someplace else before coming back to the

Berkshires. Another 28.5% did not move out of the area and 27.9% were not raised here.

The majority of respondents who currently live here do not feel pressured to leave (72.3%). When those who do feel pressured were asked who is pressuring them to leave, 51.3% reported that their friends are pressuring them. Table 4 lists the reasons why people feel pressured to move out.

Table 4. Who is pressuring you to leave the area?

Who is pressuring you to leave	% of respondents
Friends	51.3%
Business	40.5%
Family	37.2%
Partner	25.2%
Press	7.9%
Teachers	7.0%

Because it's always been home. Everybody and everything I care about is here. And it really is a beautiful place to live and a great place to raise a family.

In addition to the above responses, a number of people added reasons including the climate, crime, cost of living, a lack of jobs, a lack of opportunities, the lack of young adults, the local attitudes and one’s self.

Those who may leave

Only 40.95% of those who currently live here believe they will be here in 5 -10 years with 22.6% saying they will not be here and 36.5% reporting that they are not sure. There are a variety of reasons why people may leave (Table 5), but the three items that are mentioned by most people are better paying jobs, job availability with one’s chosen field (and opportunity for advancement) and lack of things to do.

Table 5. Reasons Why You May Leave

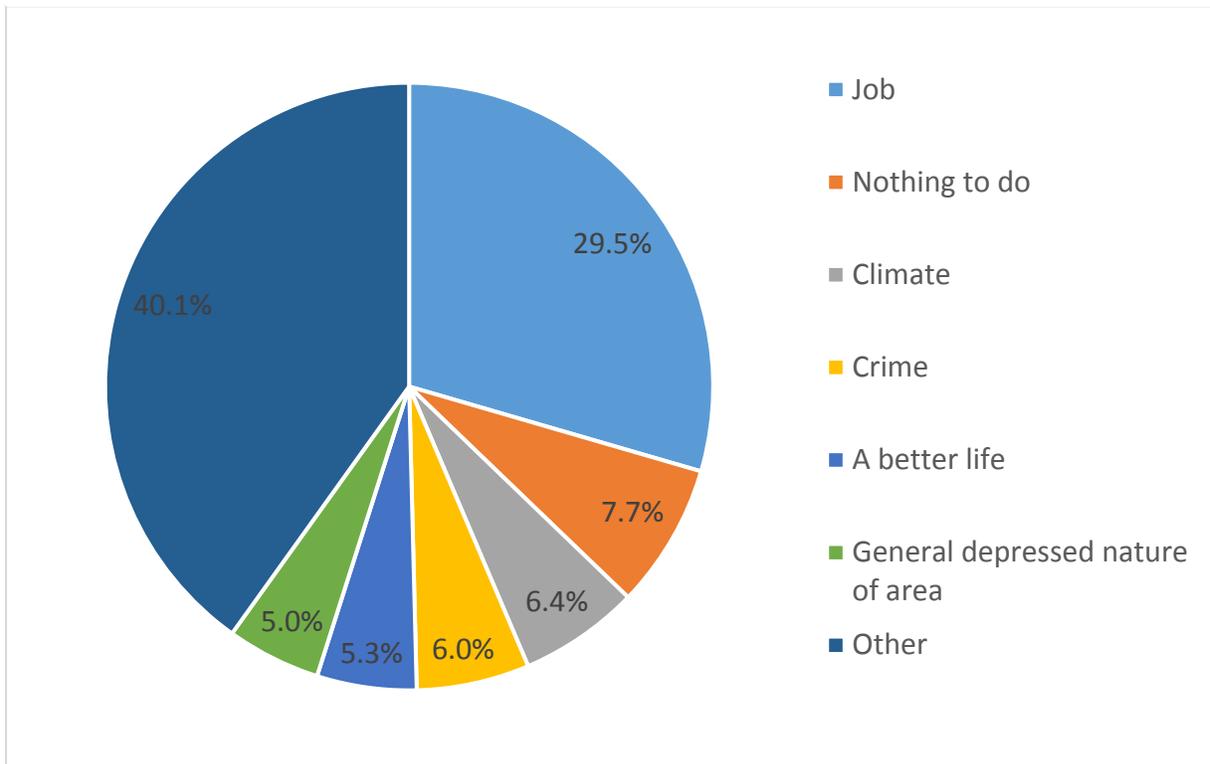
Reasons why you may leave	% of respondents
Better paying job	63.2%
Lack of things to do	55.3%
Work I want to do isn't available/ advancement within my career	54.3%
No nightlife	40.9%
Don't like the cold and snow	35.6%
Want to move to a different geography	
Friends are in other places	27.4%
Have student debt and need a higher paying job	26.6%
Want a more urban setting	26.2%
Want to start a new life	24.1%
Personality / vibe of the area	23.1%
Never intended to stay here long term	21.3%
Family / Partner wants to leave	20.5%
Can't find a suitable partner	19.6%
Lack of opportunities in school for my kids	18.1%
Want to raise kids someplace else	16.9%
Lack of public transportation	15.4%
Family doesn't live here	15.3%
Want different outdoor recreation opportunities	12.8%
Lack of good internet service	11.8%
Seeking education / training elsewhere	11.4%
Don't enjoy the cultural activities	9.2%
Need to get away from family	7.5%
Too liberal	4.3%
Want to start a business someplace else	2.9%

There are numerous other reasons that people gave as well, including crime, cell service, lack of diversity, local politics, the locals, medical reasons, lack of affordable housing, cost of living and too much focus on the older population.

When examining the single biggest reason why people may leave, job opportunities came out on top at 29.5%, nothing to do at 7.7%, the climate at 6.4%, crime at 6.0% and for a better life at 5.3%. Numerous other reasons were given as well, but none of them amounted to more than 5%. There are a group of reasons, which cumulatively add up to 7.0%, that should be noted and they revolve around a general depressed nature of the county.

I crave more opportunities than are available to me in this area

Figure 3. Single biggest reason why they may leave



Those who have left

When examining those who have left, 13.2% of them live in Boston and an addition 25% of them currently live in Massachusetts, but outside of Boston. Ten percent (10.4%) live in New England outside of Massachusetts, 9.2% live in New York City and an additional 9.9% live in the rest of the Northeast, mostly in the Hudson Valley / Capital District area. The Mid-Atlantic gets 8.2% and the South gets 8.1%. The Mid-West gets 3.2% while the West gets 11.4%. One and a half percent (1.5%) have moved abroad.

When asked why they left the Berkshires, job opportunities is the biggest reason. Table 6 details the various reasons why they left.

Table 6. Why Did You Leave

Why did you leave?	% of respondents
Work I want to do isn't available here / advancement within my career	67.8%
Better paying job	49.5%
Lack of things to do	41.9%
Seeking education / training elsewhere	34.2%
Want a more urban setting	33.8%
No nightlife	31.9%
Have student debt and need a higher paying job	23.9%
Want to start a new life	20.4%
Friends are in other places	19.1%
Lack of public transportation	16.9%

Berkshire County Young Adult Survey Results

Personality / vibe of the area	16.3%
Can't find a suitable partner	13.8%
Never intended to stay	13.4%
Want to move to a different geography	12.6%
Don't like the cold and snow	12.5%
Want to raise kids someplace else	11.4%
Lack of opportunities in school for my kids	10.1%
Need to get away from family	8.8%
Family / Partner wanted to leave	8.6%
Family doesn't live here	8.0%
Want different outdoor recreation opportunities	6.6%
Don't enjoy the cultural activities	6.4%
Lack of good internet service	6.0%
Too liberal	2.7%
Want to start a new business someplace else	2.0%

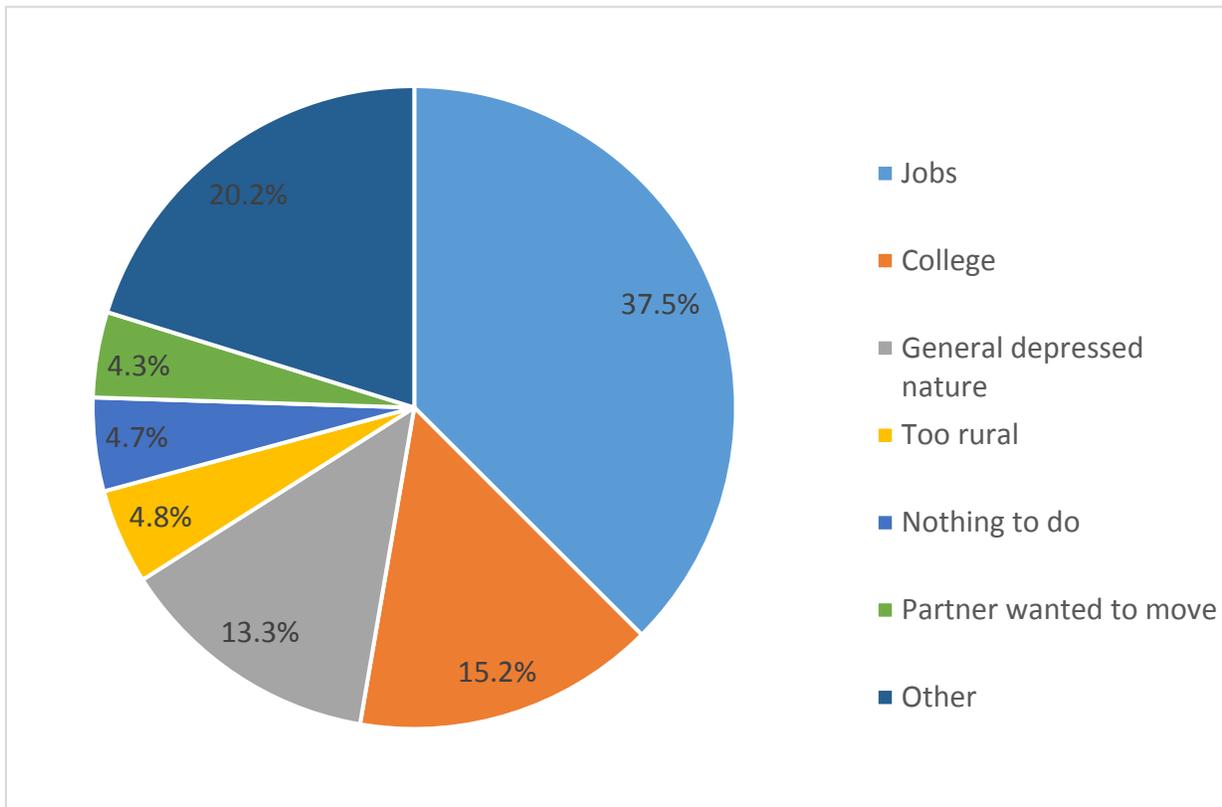
Other reasons that were mentioned include lack of affordable housing, crime, lack of daycare, lack of healthcare, lack of diversity, local politics, military, negative feel of the area, lack of young adults, and tourists.

When looking at the single biggest reason respondents have left, the biggest reason is job opportunities at 37.5% followed by college at 15.2%. The region being too rural came in at 4.8%, nothing to do at 4.7% and my partner wanted to move at 4.3%. The group of items related to the general depressed nature of the area came in as the third biggest reason at 13.3% when combined.

Nobody stays in the Berkshires. Not many opportunities to do well financially in the Berkshires.

Overall, the people who left the Berkshires enjoyed it, with 86.7% stating they enjoyed it. Seventy two percent (71.9%) of those who left miss the Berkshires and 58.8% would return if their current job and pay was available in the region. However only 40.8% actually think they will return.

Figure 4. Single biggest reason why they left



When asked if they were encouraged to leave, only 35.7% reported they were. Table 7 depicts who encouraged people to leave.

Table 7. Who Pressured You to Leave

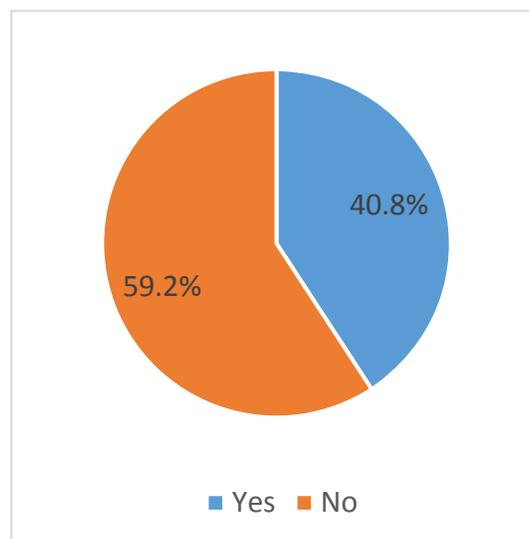
Who pressured you to leave	% of respondents
Family	77.7%
Friends	69.3%
Teachers	34.0%
Partner	26.2%
Business	15.7%
Press	3.9%

When asked why they think they may return to the region, the biggest reason was family closely followed by the natural scenery. Table 8 reports the responses to why people may come back.

Table 8. Why May You Come Back

Why may you come back someday?	% of respondents
Have family in the area	76.2%
Like the natural scenery	73.8%
Enjoy the outdoor recreation	57.3%
New England lifestyle	55.4%
Have friends in the area	55.2%
Want to raise my family here	47.9%
Live someplace with less stress and traffic than a big city	46.9%
Enjoy the cultural activities	45.1%
Live in a rural, small town, small urban area	44.0%
Like having four different seasons / enjoy the snow and cold weather	40.9%
Live in a house I can afford	38.3%
It's my home, it's where I belong	38.3%
Liberal area	32.9%
Live relatively close to major urban areas	29.3%
Low crime rate	24.9%
Offered job in the area	18.9%
Went to college in the area	7.5%
Partner wants to move to the area	5.7%
Live with parents to pay off student debt	3.4%
Start a business	2.6%

Figure 5. Will you come back?



Berkshire County Young Adult Survey Results

Values

All of the respondents were asked to rank their values on items important to them from Extremely Important to Not Important. The importance ranks were then given weights (5-1 with 5 being the most important and 1 being not important) and then combined with the percentage of respondents to come up with an overall importance for that item. The most important items to young adults who responded to the survey was having a job that meets their interests, closely followed by a job that pays well, a job that offers advancement, quality housing they can afford and family. Table 9 provides the results of the respondent's values.

Coming from a small town (much smaller than Pittsfield), I think the area is great! Young adults that grew up here aren't very appreciative of what the Berkshires have to offer. There are things to do, if you know where to look. I do think that there could be more events targeted for young adults. For example, developing the live music scene that appeals to the young adults.

Table 9. Values and their Importance

Value	Importance
Job that meets your interest	4.4
Job that pays well	4.3
Job that offers advancement	4.3
Quality housing that I can afford	4.2
Family	4.1
Good schools	3.9
Natural scenery	3.8
Outdoor recreation	3.8
Friends	3.8
Cultural activities	3.7
Climate	3.5
Short commutes / less traffic	3.5
People with similar views	3.4
Proximity to major urban areas	3.2
Proximity to educational institutions	3.2
Nightlife	3.1
Rural life	3.1
Urban life	2.7
Public transportation	2.6

What can be done

All respondents were asked what can be done to improve the Berkshires for young adults. Better jobs, both pay and advancement, topped the list of things that need to occur to improve the Berkshires. Following that is providing better quality housing that's affordable to young adults and providing rail access to the major urban areas. Table 10 provides the breakdown of the responses on what can be done.

Table 10. What Can Be Done

What can be done	% of responses
Higher paying jobs	81.6%
More opportunities for career advancement	80.5%
Better quality housing that's affordable to young adults	62.2%
Provide rail access to the major urban areas	61.9%
Improve nightlife	54.6%
Better public transportation	31.3%
Different cultural activities than what is currently offered	31.0%
More organized sports leagues for young adults	29.8%
Provide better internet service	26.1%

Characteristics of Respondents

Fifty eight percent (58.2%) of the respondents who were raised in the county moved out of the county for college or the military and 30.3% of the respondents went to college in the Berkshires.

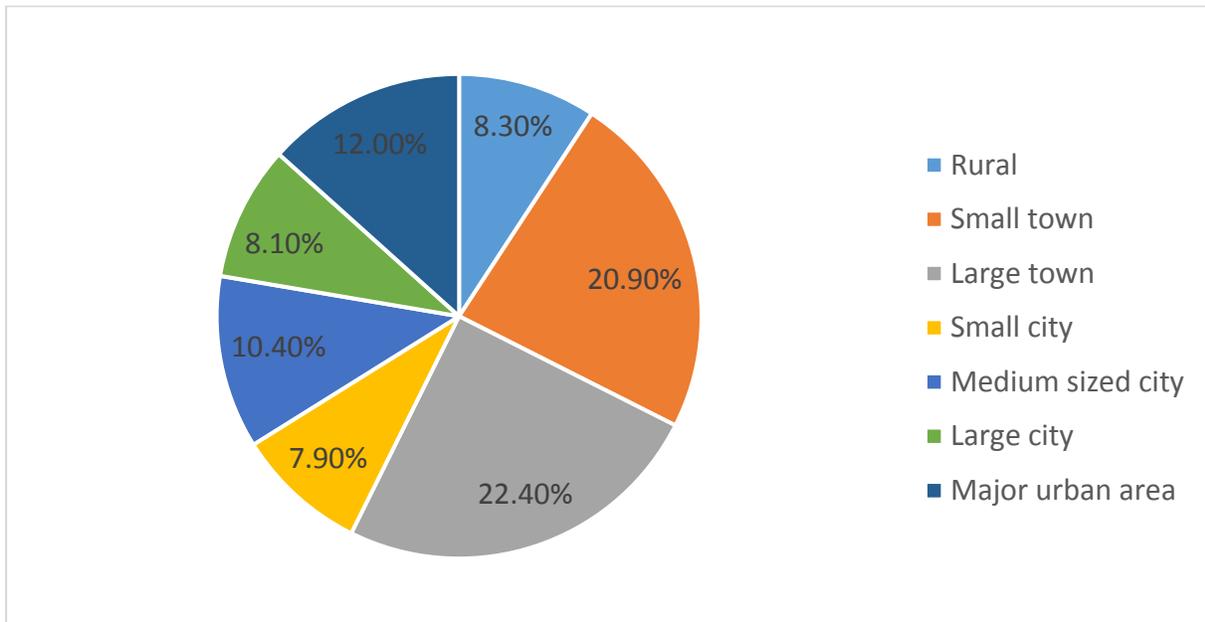
After living in small towns and big cities, the Berkshires are the best of both worlds.

The preference for living environment is evenly split at around 20% for small town, 22% large town and 10% for medium size city, while another 12% is for larger sized cities that do not exist in the region.

Table 11. Living Environment Preference of Respondents

Living Environment Preference	% of respondents
Rural	8.3%
Small town	20.9%
Large town	22.4%
Small city	7.9%
Medium sized city	10.4%
Large city	8.1%
Major urban area	12.0%

Figure 6. Preferred Living Preference



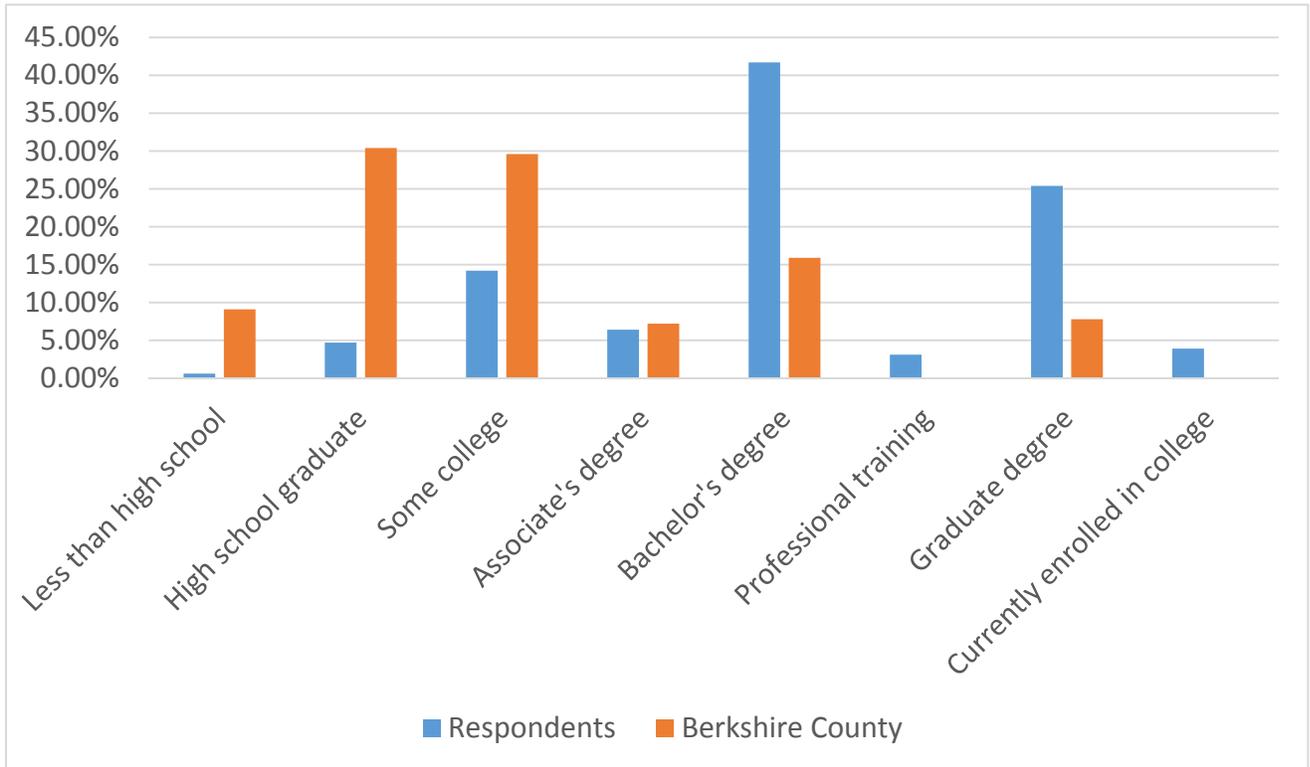
The educational attainment of all of the respondents of the survey is oversampled towards those with a Bachelor’s or Graduate degree, while in reality the general population of the Berkshires have more people that have less education. Table 12 depicts the educational attainment breakdown.

Table 12. Educational Attainment of Respondents

Educational Attainment	% of Respondents	% of Berkshire Young Adults
Less than high school graduate	0.6%	9.1%
High School graduate	4.7%	30.4%
Some college	14.2%	29.6%
Associate’s degree	6.4%	7.2%
Bachelor’s degree	41.7%	15.9%
Professional training	3.1%	NA
Graduate degree	25.4%	7.8%
Currently enrolled in college	3.9%	NA

Berkshire County Young Adult Survey Results

Figure 7. Educational attainment of respondents



The age of the respondents is more representative of the region, however the survey has under sampled the 18-21 year olds. Table 13 depicts the age breakdown. The total number of 18-21 year olds in the county is inflated due to the colleges in the area, mostly MCLA and Williams who attract students from outside of the county. When the 18-21 year olds are taken out of the equation, all age groups are within 7% of actual, which is a good representation.

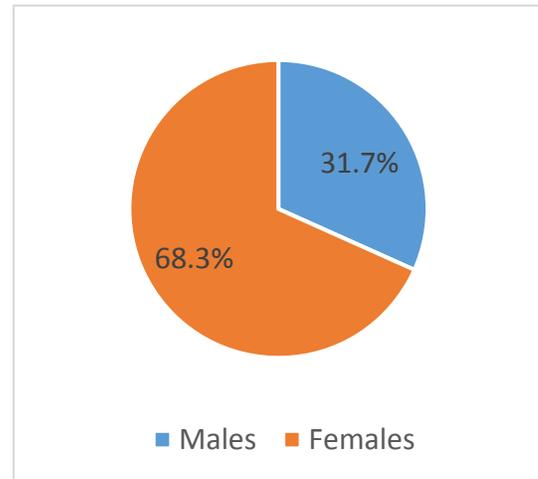
A lot of the young people who complain about the Berkshires haven't left and lived somewhere else. Many of my friends lived elsewhere and then realized that, whatever its drawbacks, the Berkshires are pretty great.

Table 13. Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	% of Respondents	% of Berkshire Young Adults
18-21	6.4%	25.1%
22-24	13.9%	13.8%
25-29	31.2%	20.3%
30-34	29.0%	19.8%
35-39	19.4%	21.0%

Males and females both responded well to the survey, however far more females responded than males. Females represent 68.3% of the respondents while males represented the remaining 31.7%. In the Berkshires, the region is split equally at 50.2% for males and 49.8% for females.

Figure 8. Gender of respondents



The racial breakdown of the respondents was more heavily weighted towards whites, which responded with 95.8% of the results, while the remaining races were all around 1%. Within this age range in Berkshire County, whites represent 84.6%, with Hispanics at 5.3%, Blacks at 3.4%, Asians at 2.2%, Native American’s at 0.4% and two or more races at 2.7%. Due to the small number of respondents for other races, analysis cannot be done at the racial level to see how views change based on race.

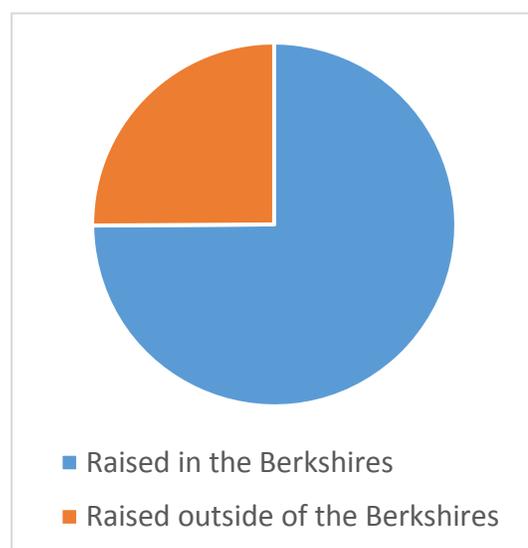
Analysis of Differences

The below sections review several sets of comparisons, including Natives vs Non-natives (people who were born and raised in the region versus those who were raised elsewhere), plans to stay, current residency, educational attainment, age and gender

Natives vs Non-Natives

Comparing the natives to the non-natives, there are some major differences in why they are here. Eighty two percent (82.7%) of natives are here because of family, while only 17.9% of non-natives are here due to family. Sixty seven percent (67%) of non-natives are here due to jobs, while only 39.6% of natives are. Friends influence the natives (54.4%) while they are not as influential on non-natives (19.2%). None of these are a surprise, but the natives enjoy the four seasons more (29% to 24%) and want to raise their families here (29% to 17%), while at the same time they struggle more financially (24% can’t afford to leave compared to 5% and 17% are living with their parents to pay off student debt compared to 1%). The non-natives enjoy the cultural activities more (29% to 15%) yet more of them are here because their partner is here (26% to 12%).

Figure 9. Nativity of respondents



Berkshire County Young Adult Survey Results

When looking at the single biggest reason respondents are here, 56% of natives are here because of family, 11% are here because of a job, 10% are here because of friends, 7% are here because of their partner, 6% are here because they can't afford to leave, 6% because they want to raise a family here and 6% are here because of the quality of life, while for non-natives, 45% are here because of jobs, 11% are here because of partners, 11% are here because of family, 7% are here because of college and 6% are here because of their partner's job.

Non-natives are about 3% higher in enjoyment of the region than natives.

Natives are planning to stay more than non-natives (43% to 36%) while more non-natives believe they will leave (26% to 21%). About the same number of natives and non-natives are unsure if they will stay.

In The Berkshires I feel more connected to the things I value-nature, the arts, family, community, creativity.

There are a number of differences between natives and non-natives in why they may leave. Natives seem to view the area as having a lack of things to do, have less tolerance for the cold and snow (yet they like having four seasons more), want to move to different geographies, view our schools as providing a lack of opportunities for their kids, and crime as more important reasons than non-natives. Non-natives view their friends being in different places, desire for a more urban setting, family not living here, lack of good internet service and never intending to stay here as more important reasons than the natives.

When examining the reasons why people left, the natives again cited a lack of things to do as a larger reason than the non-natives as well as college, while the non-natives cited the inability to find a suitable partner and never intended to stay here as a bigger reasons than natives. There was however a number of items related to the general depressed nature of the area that combined contributed to 20% of the natives leaving. This percentage is 10% higher than the non-natives who felt the same way.

The natives feel family is more important as a reason to come back than the non-natives, however the non-natives feel the scenic beauty, outdoor recreation, less urbanized area, and cultural activities are more important than the natives for reasons to move back.

In comparing the natives who live here or have moved away as well as the non-natives who live here or have moved away, better quality housing that is affordable is a bigger items for the natives who stay here. The natives who stay here also view rail access to the major urban areas as less important than the other respondents. Improving nightlife also is more important to the natives who stay here as well as different cultural activities than what is currently offered and more organized sports leagues for adults.

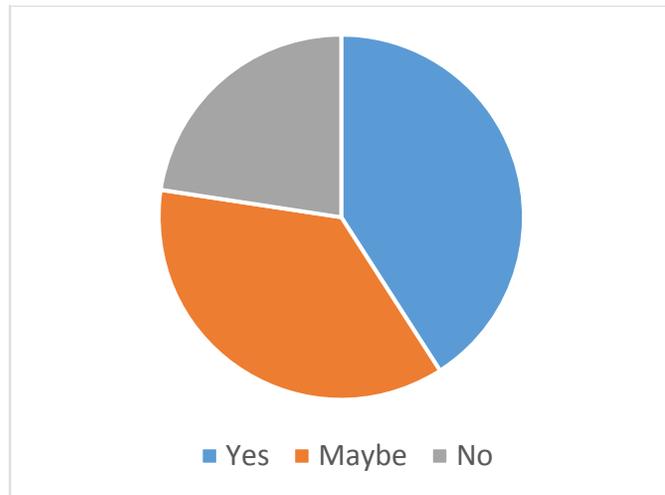
The percentage of respondents that are native versus those who are not native is correlated with educational level as the percentage of natives going down as educational attainment goes up.

Plans to stay

When comparing the reasons why people are here, by if they will stay here in the next 5-10 years, those who plan to stay have a higher percentage as compared to the "no's" and "maybe's" for many reasons, including family being here, having a job in the area, having friends in the area, the scenic beauty, like living someplace with less stress and traffic than a big city but enjoy being close to the major cities, the

four seasons, the rural/small town atmosphere, desire to raise a family here, live in a house they can afford, enjoy the cultural activities, and consider the Berkshires home. The respondents who think they will leave in the next 5-10 years all report the lowest percentage on the above items and the highest percentage on not being able to afford to leave, went to college in the area and living with parents to pay off student debt. The maybe's are close to evenly split between the Yes and No percentage, however there are two areas where they are much closer aligned to the no's – they do not in general want to raise a family here and they don't really consider "it's my home, it's where I belong".

Figure 10. Planning to Stay



The single biggest reason people are here, by if they plan to stay or leave comes across as family, however family has a much stronger percentage for those who are planning to stay than those who want to leave, while those who are planning to leave have a higher percentage for jobs than those who want to stay. Not being able to afford to leave is also a larger percentage for those who plan to leave.

All of my family is in the Berkshires.

Those who plan to stay in the Berkshires express a 96% enjoyment of the region, while only 47% of those who plan to leave enjoy the region. Those who are undecided about staying exhibit an 82% enjoyment of the region.

Among those who plan to leave in 5-10 years, the biggest reason is the job followed by there being nothing to do and the lack of nightlife in the region.

Those who plan to leave in the next 5-10 years report a higher percentage than those who are undecided for a lack of things to do, a lack of work in their field or the ability to advance, no nightlife, friends being in different places, wanting a more urban setting, wanting to start a new life, not liking the personality of the area, wanting to seek education/training elsewhere and not enjoying the cultural activities.

For those who plan to leave in 5-10 years, only 28% of them left the county previously for college or the military, whereas 43% of those who plan to stay left the county previously for college or the military.

Eighty eight percent (88%) of those who plan to stay consider it a desirable place to live, while only 51% of those who plan to leave consider it a desirable place to live.

For those who are planning to leave or might leave, having quality affordable housing, an improved nightlife and different cultural activities than what is currently offered are more important than for those who plan to stay.

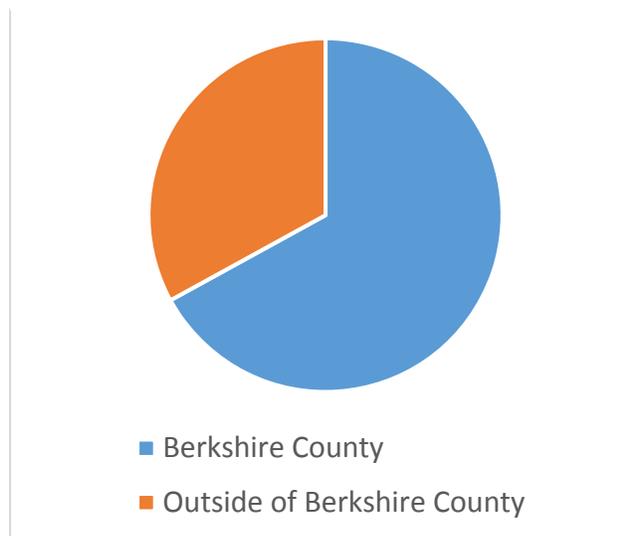
Comparing those who will stay versus those who will leave or may leave offers some additional insight into their values. All three categories of job values continue to be the most important thing for all

groups, but more so for those who will be leaving. This is followed by quality housing, which is more important to those who are planning to leave or may leave. Family, friends, a rural life, short commutes, the natural scenery and good schools are all more important to those who will be staying. An urban life, proximity to major urban areas, cultural activities, nightlife, climate, public transportation, proximity to education and people with similar views are all more important to those who plan to leave.

Current Residency

Of those who left the region, 87% enjoyed living in the Berkshires whereas 80% who currently live here enjoy it.

Figure 11. Current residence of respondents



Those who are living here consider having a job that meets their interests the most important thing followed by a job that pays well and a job that offers advancement. These are followed by quality housing, family, good schools, scenic beauty, outdoor recreation and friends. Those who are not living here anymore consider the three job categories as the most important followed by quality housing. Other categories that are also important to those who do not live here include good schools, family, scenic beauty, cultural activities, outdoor recreation and friends.

Those who do not currently live in the Berkshire's also relates to educational levels in that those with Bachelor's or graduate degrees are far less likely to stay in the county than those without a Bachelor's degree.

Educational Attainment

Close to half the respondents (45%) who have a bachelors or graduate degree and were raised in the area have left, while only 22% of those without a bachelors or graduate degree and were raised in the county have left.

When looking at the reasons why people are here by educational level, having a family and friends in the area is far more important to those without a Bachelor's degree or higher, whereas those with a Bachelor's degree or higher place more importance on the job than family or friends. The educational level is also impacting many other reasons, with more importance placed on items as educational level increases for items such as the natural scenery, outdoor recreation, living in a rural/small town area without the stress of a big city, the four seasons,

Urban areas appeal to young people for obvious reasons: community, socialization, job opportunities, convenience. Unfortunately populated/overpopulated areas bring other issues such as drugs, crime, higher prices, noise and environmental pollution. ... Towns like Pittsfield would be a great choice for many if not for the relatively recent increase in crimes related to drugs and gangs. Even locals are highly reluctant to invest in this potentially perfect New England town, citified enough for an urbanite to adjust to. It will take a strong political initiative to tackle that issue.

*Advancement of my education
(graduate level)*

living in a house they can afford, the New England lifestyle, the cultural activities, the proximity to the major urban areas and being in a liberal area. A decreased importance is placed on certain items as well as one's educational level increases, such as considering the Berkshire's home, it's where they

belong and not being able to afford to leave.

The single biggest reason people are here based on educational level also varies. Family is the biggest reason for all educational levels, but of less importance for those with Bachelor's or higher degrees. Jobs are much higher in importance (20%+) for those with Bachelor degree or higher. Its home, I can't afford to leave and I'm stuck here is far bigger of an issue for those with less education.

Enjoyment of the region also is dependent on educational attainment with the percentage of those who enjoy the area going up as you get more educated.

Education also determines if you plan to stay here for the next 5-10 years with a higher percentage planning to stay here as the educational attainment increases.

The educational attainment also factors in why people may leave with the higher the educational levels wanting higher paying jobs, more job opportunities, wanting of a more urban setting and wanting to be with family that isn't here. Reasons that are more important as educational attainment decreases include lack of things to do and no nightlife, not liking the cold and snow, want to live in a different geography, want to start a new life, don't care for the personality of the area, and want different outdoor recreational opportunities.

*Poor job market and pay for
educated individuals*

Looking at educational attainment and why people may leave largely is based on job opportunities, with almost half of those with a Bachelor's degree or higher citing jobs as the reason they may leave and 26% for those with less education. Having nothing to do is the second main reason people want to leave, with a higher percentage for the less

educated. One significant difference is the group of factors revolving the general depressed nature of the area (crime, poverty, unfriendliness, economy and general dislike of the area). Over 40% of those with only a high school diploma consider this the main reason they will leave, while only 15% of those with a graduate degree consider this the main reason with the other educational levels spread based on educational level.

The educational attainment of the respondents has also impacted those who left with those with higher educational attainment wanting a more urban setting as well as leaving for job opportunities. Those with less education cited wanting to start a new life, personality of the area, not liking the snow and cold and family/partner wanting to leave.

Based on educational attainment, jobs is far more of a driver for the more educated as well as college, while the group of factors relating to the general depressed nature of the area leads at 31% of those with only a high school diploma, while only 12% of those with graduate degrees consider this a reason for leaving.

What is noticeable from the above mentioned data is that those with less education have a higher percentage of wanting to leave, but fewer of them actually leave as compared to those with more education. Those with less education also cite the desire for a more urban environment as a reason they may leave, but the more educated actually cite it as a higher reason for why they did leave.

Differences between educational levels exist in reasons why people may come back, including the more educated liking the New England lifestyle, want to raise their families here and rural/small towns, while the less educated have friends in the area.

Those with more education view the job opportunities with more importance and rail access to the major urban areas, while those with less education want better housing that's affordable and different cultural activities than what is currently offered.

As one's education level increases, a higher percentage of them plan to stay in the Berkshires as they view the area as more desirable to live in.

There are less differences among values based on education level than one would expect. Major differences include more importance of a job that meets your interests among those with more education, the rural life and quality housing for those with less education, cultural activities among those with more education, nightlife for those with more education (except for graduate degrees which are much lower), and climate among those with less education.

Wanderlust got me out but I'll probably go back to raise kids. It's not a place for 20-30 year olds

Age

The survey clearly shows that reasons change based on age.

For those who currently live in the Berkshires, 22-29 year olds are here for a job more than other age groups and those who went to college in the area decreases as you get older. Living with one's parents to pay off student debt and not being able to afford to leave both decrease as one gets older. Following a partner and raising a family all gain

importance as one ages as does enjoying the cultural activities, living close to urban areas, having less stress than a big city, living in a house you can afford and wanting to start a business all increased as one ages.

Age also impacts one's enjoyment of the Berkshires with enjoyment increasing through the mid-thirties, at which point it declines slightly. Adults less than 25 are far more likely to be planning to leave the Berkshires, while those in their late 20's are uncertain and those in their 30s are more likely to stay.

Differences exist between the age groups on why current residents may leave. Job opportunities and higher pay are most important among 22-24 year olds and decrease as one ages. Student debt, friends in other places, a lack of things to do, college, lack of nightlife and wanting to start a new life are also all more important to the younger adults and less important as one ages. Wanting a more urban environment, different cultural activities and never intending to stay here are all important for 18-24 year olds, but not important to older young adults. Not being able to find a suitable partner is also important to 22-29 year olds and not as much of an issue as one gets older. The lack of opportunities for kids in school is an issue that gains importance as one ages.

I've grown to really love the area - I can't see myself anywhere else.

The reasons people did leave are mostly similar to one another, however a few differences do occur. Wanting to start a new life, wanting a more urban setting, the lack of a nightlife, never intended to stay here long term, lack of things to do and don't enjoy the cultural activities were more of issue for the younger age groups. Lack of opportunities for kids was an issue for the older young adults and was the only item that went up as age goes up. After college age, jobs is the single biggest reason across all age groups for why people leave.

Of those that left the area, many felt pressured to leave, with a higher percentage among the younger cohorts than the older cohorts.

When asked if they will come back some day, the percentage that think they will goes down as one gets older. When asked for a reason, the only reason where age makes a difference is the enjoyment of the cultural activities, which goes up as one ages.

Age impacts the value one puts on various interests, but not as much as other factors, such as education. The importance of rural life increases as one ages as does good schools, while the importance of an urban life decreases as one ages as does night life and public transportation.

As to what can be done to improve the Berkshires based on age groups, improving nightlife, offering different cultural activities, providing better quality affordable housing and more organized adult sport leagues are all more important the younger you are.

Gender

Gender can also play an important part of why someone lives in the Berkshires. Overall, a higher percentage of female respondents stay in the area than males. The reasons the two genders are here are different as well. A higher percentage of males are here because of jobs, while a higher percentage of females are here because of family. Females are also here at a higher percentage because their partner lives/works here. Males also enjoy the outdoor recreation more than the females, while females are here more than males because they can't afford to leave.

When looking at the single biggest reason they are here, females are here overwhelmingly because of family (49%), while an equal percentage of men are

My parents are still in the Berkshires, as are other family and friends. I still hate winter, but adore summers there. Since I was very young, my family attended Tanglewood, the Williamstown Theatre Festival, and the Saratoga Performing Arts Center all the time. As difficult as the climate was, it was the constant fight to find decent employment that caused me to leave... What I recall from my 3 decades in the Berkshires, is that it's filled with hard working, talented, principled people who have zero opportunities in life, in comparison to the "outside world." That the outside world enters in in the form of tourists, second-home owners, and amazing artistry for a few months a year, kids us into thinking there's a decent life to be lived there. Its life, but it's not enough. It could and should be so much better. Young people have no reason to stay. There's no economic prosperity, which everyone deserves the opportunity to have.

here because of family (29%) and jobs (28%).

Females are more likely to stay here (43%) while males aren't as sure (40%). For those who might leave, more males are looking to leave for a higher paying job, while more females are looking to leave because they have higher student debt and need higher pay. Males also don't enjoy the cultural activities as much, want different outdoor recreation activities and don't like the cold and snow as much. Females are more inclined to leave because they want to raise their kids someplace else and see a lack of opportunity for their kids in school. Males think there is less nightlife than females, while females want to leave more to start a new life.

For those who have actually left, most reasons conform to the overall results, however more females never intended to stay here long term, have trouble finding a suitable mate, are seeking education elsewhere and want to start a new life.

More males than females expect to come back one day, although their reasons are mostly the same. The only major difference is that females want more of a rural, small town life than males.

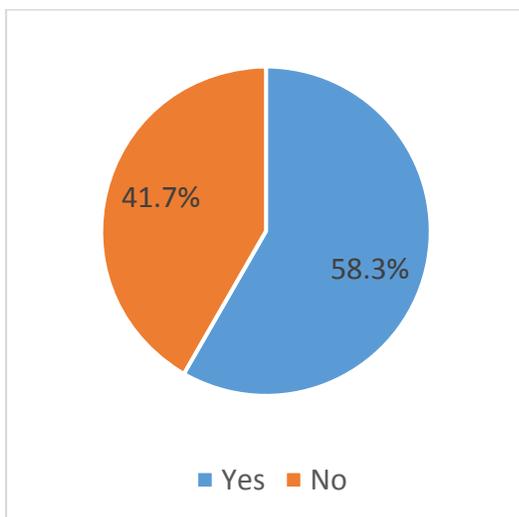
When looking at values, females place a higher value on families, while males place a higher value on jobs that offer advancement. Females also place a higher importance on the proximity to major urban areas, quality housing they can afford, cultural activities, proximity to educational institutions, good schools and people with similar views. Males place a higher importance on nightlife and outdoor recreation.

For improving the Berkshires, males believe an improved nightlife and better internet access are more important than females, while females think different cultural activities should be offered, more opportunities for career advancement, better quality housing and better public transportation should be provided.

Did you leave for College or the Military

When comparing the respondents who left the area for college or the military to those who did not leave or those who grew up elsewhere, noticeable differences exist.

Figure 12. Left for college or the military



When looking at why they currently live in the area, being offered a job in the area is more of a reason for those who grew up elsewhere as well as those who left and came back. Wanting to raise a family here is more important to those who came back than those who never left and least important to those who grew up elsewhere. Those who grew up elsewhere are more interested in the cultural activities followed by those who left and came back. Those who never left have the least interest in the cultural activities. Those who never left have the least enjoyment of the outdoor recreation and the least interest in the natural scenery. Those who left and came back have a higher enjoyment of the four seasons. Those who have never left have less of an interest in the proximity to the major urban areas as well as the least interest in the liberal

Berkshire County Young Adult Survey Results

nature of the area, but more of those who have never left can afford to leave. Those who have not left also consider this their home more than those who have left and came back or those who grew up elsewhere.

Those who grew up here and left for college or the military and came back report a higher level of enjoyment of the region (85%), with those who never left reporting the lowest level of enjoyment (73%).

Almost half (48%) of those who left for college or the military indicate they will stay here, while only 38% of those who never left plan to stay and 35% of those who grew up elsewhere plan to stay. When asked why they may leave, a higher percentage of those who went away for college or the military report they would leave due to the work they want to do isn't available here, the inability to advance within their career or their desire for a higher paying job than those who have never left. Those who never left and those who grew up elsewhere report more pressure from their family and partner to leave. Those who never left report less of a desire for a more urban setting, more of a desire for different outdoor recreational opportunities, more of a lack of things to do, wanting to raise their kids someplace else and wanting to start a new life.

Those who have never left the area consider the Berkshires less of a desirable place to live than those who have left and come back as well as those who were raised elsewhere.

The combination of natural beauty and cultural activities.

The values are very similar for those who have left and come back versus those who have stayed or those who grew up other places. A few of the minor differences include a higher importance on families for those who have never left as well as a higher importance for the rural area, good schools and the climate, while the proximity to major urban areas is of more importance to those from other areas as well as those who have left and come back.

When asked about what can be done to improve the Berkshires for young adults, those who have never left think that providing better quality housing that they can afford, an improved nightlife and higher paying jobs are more important than those who have left or are from outside the area, while those who have left and come back place a higher importance on career advancement opportunities. Better public transit is more important to those who have moved in, while those who moved in as well as those who have come back place a higher importance on rail access to the major urban areas. Those from outside the area also place a higher importance on better internet service.

Those who have left and come back place a higher preference for major urban areas, while those who have not left place a higher preference for small towns. Those who have come from other areas place a higher preference for small cities and large cities.

Those who have never left have a much higher percentage of no college, some college and associates degree and a lower percentage on bachelor and graduate degrees. Those who have come into the area from elsewhere have a higher percentage on graduate degrees.

Strategies

By examining the reasons why people may leave as well as the importance people place on values, strategies can be developed that can help attract and retain more young adults.

Economic Opportunity

Diversify, broaden and deepen job opportunities for ALL educational levels

Broaden the marketing to include companies that focus on or have employees who are passionate about what we have – culture and environment

Advocate for STEM and knowledge industry jobs

Encourage more non-seasonal / non-service based jobs

Space, grants and opportunities for emerging artists

More entrepreneurial opportunities and incentives for local or cooperative businesses

Welcoming environment for new businesses (startups, mid growth companies)

Improve schools so kids are prepared for work/college

Diversify college offerings, including more graduate degrees

Cultivate younger talent and support them on leadership tracks

Physical Community

Continue revitalization of diverse walkable downtowns so people can live, work and play

Increase environmental sustainability of the cities

Improve housing stock and affordability, especially in downtowns and surrounding areas

Clustered housing for young adults around the downtowns

Promote pet-friendly rentals

Make it affordable for small businesses to thrive in storefronts

Social Opportunity

Publicize activities – (Just the Berkshires, Berkshire Family Focus, and Berkshires 24-7)

Offer alternative events for those who are not interested in the current cultural offerings

Make venues more affordable to the locals, especially summer activities

Further develop and promote year round cultural activities

Create a venue for hosting music, festivals, and conferences year round

Berkshire County Young Adult Survey Results

Focus on the locals

Offer more organized adult sport leagues

Promote outdoor recreation opportunities

Develop and promote Indoor activities for the winter

Develop and promote more family and kid activities through the week, not just during the work day

Provide more opportunities for kids in school

Engage teens and develop activities they are interested in

Work with schools and parents to take pride in their community and encourage them to stay

Provide higher quality affordable day care

Attract more affordable and diverse restaurants that are open later

Attract more quality retailers, both chains and local, in the downtown environments

Develop more options for nightlife that go beyond just bars or nightclubs, including a more diverse music scene

Develop and promote more events for singles

Encourage local governments to be more open, modern and inclusive. Encourage young adults to participate.

Increase the diversity of the region

Make an effort and embrace change – don't get stuck in the past

Encourage pride in the community

Promote healthier lifestyles

Improve health care access with more primary care doctors and specialists

Develop a comprehensive behavioral health treatment system

Develop more halfway houses, homeless housing, detox centers, counseling and support groups to get people off drugs

Clean it up

Connectivity

Improve rail access to major urban areas

Improve internet throughout the region

Improve cell service throughout the region

Berkshire County Young Adult Survey Results

Improve local public transportation to more areas, and expand times after 6pm and on the weekends

Creation of bike paths through the region

Improve interstate access to Central and North County